



This weekend witnessed the official opening of the renovated Frans Figaroa Sports Complex

This past Saturday evening, September 9 saw the results of a project that has been underway since 2001, a project close to the heart of the Minister of Labor, Culture and Sport, Ramon Lee. It was with great emotion that he joined Melissa and Marc Figaroa, the grandchildren of Frans Figaroa, in unveiling the new sculpture by artist Maritza Erasmus that now adorns Frans Figaroa Sports Center in Noord.

Not only local dignitaries and the family of Frans Figaroa, a legendary figure in Aruban sports history and a governor of the island from 1979 to 1982, attended the evening's festivities. Many from the local community observed the opening ceremony and joined in the celebration afterwards, which included a demonstration soccer match by noted local soccer luminaries. A part of the evening's festivities entailed the awarding of plaques to some of the island's great soccer players of the past, including Luis Giel, who addressed the gathering.

The official ceremony included an address by the minister, Ramon Lee, and by the President of the Sports Facility Foundation, Ta Kong (Dochi) Lee besides the Prime Minister of Aruba, Nelson Oduber. The Prime Minister particularly praised Minister Lee for his determination and persistence in seeing the stadium, which had fallen into disrepair, renovated to present to the public this beautiful new facility. The Frans Figaroa Sport Complex boasts a soccer field with stands for 1500, facilities for volleyball, softball, basketball and also unique to Aruba, an area particular to developing and competing in weight lifting. Both Minister Lee and Prime Minister Oduber expressed the importance of promoting and maintaining sport as a healthy pastime for the island's youth, encouraging them to develop "healthy minds in healthy bodies."

Contributing to the evening's entertainment were the children's choir of the Tanki Leendert Music School under the direction of Ray-Ann Hernandez, and the popular local band "Blade."

The beautiful complex is impressive and inviting, and has already become a center for a variety of events. The sports complex will operate seven days a week offering after school activities and practice fields, and competitions. Minister Lee expressed the desire to see the complex become a cultural center for the people of Noord, and the completion of a sports hotel nearby, assisting in the complex becoming a venue for international competitions.